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June 28, 2011

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Managing Director Unveils Revised Plan for Wastewater Treatment Plant

READING –Managing Director Carl Geffken today released information outlining a revised approach to comply with key elements of a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice to upgrade the city's aging wastewater treatment plant. The city has submitted its revised plans to both the Department of Justice and Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection.

"The revised plan would scale the project to meet the region's needs, but be far less costly than originally proposed," Geffken said. "We have determined our requirements to meet our waste water treatment needs through 2038, and believe we can accomplish them with a \$163 million project in three phases, which is far less than the more than \$400 million originally thought."

The city's wastewater treatment facility serves several local communities in Berks County, including Muhlenberg, Robesonia, Shillington, Kenhorst, and Wyomissing. The plant currently processes an average of 15 million gallons of wastewater a day. The upgraded facility would have a capacity of 28.5 million gallons a day.

Because of a series of operational issues resulted repeated violations of environmental regulations, the U.S. Department of Justice, acting on behalf of the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection and in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection – which was settled through a consent decree in 2005. That agreement specified improvements the city would undertake to ensure the wastewater treatment facility adhered to environmental regulations.

"It became clear in the relatively early stages of the planning phase that the proposed solution would be far too costly for ratepayers," Geffken said. "The revised approach will meet the area's needs, and save ratepayers a lot of money."

Geffken also said the plant is currently operating within regulatory parameters. "We have put a lot of focus on plant operations and the team is doing a very good job despite the obstacles posed by an aging facility."

Geffken began supervising the wastewater treatment plan design after assuming the responsibilities of the managing director in March, 2010.

The revised plan calls for retaining and re-tasking certain existing facilities, replacing wastewater pumping facilities, installing new sewage digesters and trickling filters, adding a flow meter, and building new aeration basins, all on the site of the existing plant on Fritz Island. It would also add a new pumping system to transport wastewater from the city's collection facility on Canal Street to the plant.

Depending upon the timing of regulatory approvals, the new plant could be fully operational by 2018.

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